

FINAL REPORT

Evaluation of the Orava Project

Phase I

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Executive Summary

This evaluation report constitutes the initial phase of USAID's two-part evaluation of the Orava Project—the Slovak Republic/University of Northern Iowa (UNI) Collaborative National Education Restructuring Program. The evaluation was conducted between June 23 and July 1, 1999. USAID will initiate the second and more extensive phase of the evaluation in September.

The result of an unsolicited, congressionally supported proposal to USAID/Washington in 1993, the project has been extended and expanded several times. The present contract is now scheduled to conclude on June 30, 2000, several months before the USAID Mission/Slovakia closes.

Two assessments of the project were authorized by the University of Northern Iowa and the project codirectors. The first was undertaken in early 1995, six months after the project began; the second was undertaken in June 1999 simultaneously with that authorized by USAID/Washington. The more recent of the evaluations requested by the Orava Project codirectors was undertaken by the Partners in Democratic Change/Slovakia. Slightly more than four years had elapsed without any external review and/or assessment of project performance, management, or outcomes in educational reforms and training initiatives, although over 2,000 teachers have reportedly benefited from project courses and programs.

During the eight-day evaluation period, the USAID evaluator interviewed 48 persons in six locations: Bratislava, Nitra, Topolcany, Tvrdosin, Námestovo, and Dolny Kubín; the original site and “heart” of the Orava region.

The cross-section of interviews was divided roughly between “alumni” of Orava Project courses, which included basic and elementary school teachers, principals, and district administrators and officials, and Orava-area managers and coordinators, university professors, USAID Mission personnel, the two evaluators from the Partners for Democratic Change/Slovakia, and the project codirectors.

In addition, seven persons representing a significant diversity of interests and backgrounds—from a school inspector to a school principal to Orava Project office coordinators—received and responded to a written questionnaire on major areas of project effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and stability. A summary of those responses is included in the text of the evaluation, along with five primary and ten collateral recommendations directed to Phase II of the USAID evaluation.

Responses to interview questions and the written questionnaire clearly demonstrate that the Orava Project has introduced education reforms that have had and are having achievable and identifiable impacts on decision making, teaching methodologies, professional networking, and student-centered learning in Slovakia. Further impacts on the institutionalization of Orava Project concepts and courses were discernible in the increasingly active role of the Pedagogical Faculties at Comenius University and, to a somewhat lesser extent, at the Universities of Constantine the Philosopher and MatejBel. The faculty roles and those of the four National Methods Centers, along with the Ministry of Education, are critically important not only in terms of how teachers are trained but also with respect to recertification, the process through which salary step-increases are granted.

Of significant importance is the support of the Ministry of Education, which has now designated the Deputy Minister for Secondary and Elementary schools as liaison to the Orava Project.

An additional step toward national recognition of education reform is the approval of the Orava Project as a national NGO to be known as the Orava Association for Democratic Education. The association's director is a full-time member of the Faculty of Pedagogy at Comenius University and will remain in that position. In addition, she will continue to offer an Orava Project course in early childhood education.

Among the project's successes to date was that the needs and interests of teachers, administrators, and educators in Slovakia were determined before the project commenced; selecting a site in a conservative and traditional region of the country where both the interest and response rate were high; surviving a four-year period of national indifference to Orava Project concepts; ensuring that the project involved both top-down (Ministry of Education and universities) as well as bottom-up (early childhood courses and core leader teachers in grades one through four) input to guarantee the availability of courses on both a preservice and in-service basis; and, finally, timing the project to the gradual evolution of changes in the economic and political climate within Slovakia and the region generally.

These and other positive attributes of the project now need to be clearly identified and assessed to determine the extent to which they may be replicated or extended nationally. In similar fashion, it will be increasingly necessary to look at aspects of management, project development, communications, funding, training, and evaluation if current programs are to be continued or expanded. In the area of management, the project codirectors have already relocated to the University of Northern Iowa, as have the two American managers of the Nitra office. Coordinators conversant with existing courses and methodologies are in place in the three project offices, but these same individuals must also attend to other responsibilities, such as making faculty appointments and assisting in the preparation and presentation of existing Orava courses.

In some aspects, the project has been more successful than expected. Yet, institutionalization of the successes requires sophisticated and skilled managers, especially in the areas of communication, negotiations at the ministerial level, strategic planning, national and international networking, and fundraising. Little time has been available to or devoted by current personnel to planning beyond the immediate contract insofar as in-country development of the project is concerned. There is little evidence of active solicitation of funds, in-kind contributions, and increased availability of training and uses of electronic communication. In fact, while not specified in the scope of work, the inclusion in the questionnaire of a question on uses of and access to technology and yielded disheartening responses. A section on technology is also included in the evaluation report.

Even if the project is to be continued only at its present sites (which the evaluator thinks unlikely and unrealistic), it will require a clearly defined set of objectives, priorities, and identified resources that are not readily apparent. Therefore, recommendations resulting from the preliminary phase of the evaluation focus on the implementation of strategic planning, professional training and staff development in planning, fundraising, and electronic data gathering and communication. These efforts need to be undertaken within a regularized system of objectives and evaluations to obtain

and record outcomes and progress in all facets of project activities as well as to determine the longer-term role(s) of the University of Northern Iowa and the current project codirectors.

Ancillary recommendations address issues that the Phase II evaluators may want to consider, including the viability of the Ministry of Education's involvement, the application of the project's concept and process relative to the country's minority populations, the capacity to manage the project effectively from Iowa, the responses of students and parents, and the longer-term implications of the transition from student-centered methodologies in grades one through nine to more structured curricula and methodologies at the secondary level.

The successes achieved by the project thus far logically give rise to the notion of replicating the project nationally and perhaps regionally. However, the concluding year of the current contract might be best dedicated to consolidating the successes achieved to date to ensure institutionalization of the several existing courses in the Ministry, Methods Centers, and universities and to establish both the means and plans for an orderly national expansion based on Slovak needs and interests. Such an approach will require full-time, well-trained managers in-country, with an extensive and active electronic network both nationally and with the University of Northern Iowa.

What has been initiated deserves to be continued in some reasonable format, preferably with the increased involvement and support of the government of Slovakia.

I. Introduction

This evaluation report is based on a review of various written materials pertaining to the Orava Project, a several-hour briefing at USAID/Washington, and eight days in the field.¹ The Orava Project is the Slovak Republic/University of Northern Iowa Collaborative National Education Restructuring Program.

Evaluation activities in Slovakia were almost evenly divided between interviews in Bratislava and those in several other districts and cities outside the capital, namely, Nitra, Topolcany, Tvrdosin, Námestovo, and Dolny Kubín. The evaluation team met with 48 persons within Slovakia over the eight-day period. Those persons represented a cross-section of USAID personnel, the codirectors of the Orava Project, Orava Project office coordinators (American as well as Slovak), district administrators, a school inspector, several principals, and a number of teachers representing kindergarten, grades one through four, and grades five through eight. Slightly more than one-half of the 48 persons were “alumni” of at least one Orava Project course (including one USAID employee) while six others were involved in the preparation or teaching of one or more courses. All were familiar with the Orava Project, including the two representatives from Partners for Democratic Change/Slovakia who were completing the project evaluation requested by the codirectors.²

Unfortunately, the timing of the field visit was poor; the school year ends in Slovakia on June 30, and all meetings and interviews outside Bratislava were held from June 28 to June 30. In addition, both codirectors and the two Americans involved in the administration of the Nitra office were preparing to return to the United States. If it were not for the generous accommodation of the Orava Project personnel and the various participants in the Orava courses, little communication and interaction would have occurred.

The skill in transportation and translation services deserves substantial recognition, with special thanks to both the USAID personnel who participated in the evaluation and those in the Orava Project offices in Nitra and Dolny Kubín.

Despite the timing and circumstances, the evaluation yielded a considerable amount of information and some insights into the project’s development. Of principal importance is the overriding interest in and positive response to both the concepts and implementation of the education reform process on the part of teachers, principals, and district administrators interviewed during the fieldwork. Regrettably, the evaluation team was unable to interview students or parents, and it was not possible to talk with Ministry of Education or Methods Center personnel. Students, parents, and Methods Center personnel will be critical to Phase II of the evaluation, along with members of the Pedagogical Faculties in one or two of the participating universities.

Nevertheless, the exposure to and feedback from the various individuals involved in the Orava Project provided an overall impression of cautious optimism. The impression of optimism is a function of the large number and variety of teachers and educators reached in-country in a relatively

¹Itineraries for the contract period are attached as Appendix A.

²A list of persons interviewed in-country, by categories, is attached as Appendix B.

short period of time, the positive impact of the process on the professionalism of teachers (and, and it is hoped, students), and the potential for the project's further influence on education reform nationally and, possibly, regionally. The sense of caution is a function of concern over the lack of in-country resources, the limited collaboration between the Pedagogical Faculties in support of teacher training reforms, little or no strategic planning for the project's future growth, and limited exposure to or knowledge of fundraising in-country in order to sustain the project as is or as it may develop.

II. Project History

The concept underlying the Orava Project evolved informally in 1992 following a visit to Iowa by Slovakia's then-Deputy Minister of Education. With the support of the Iowa International Development Foundation (IIDF) and the involvement of the University of Northern Iowa (UNI), the initial grant in support of the Orava Project from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) covered the period 1994–1996. The first extension and expansion of the project grant covered the period 1997–1999. A second extension of the contract (with no additional funding) received approval for the period July 2, 1999 to June 30, 2000.

The project comprises several facets the address systemic school restructuring and reforms in various ways and at different levels. The Orava Project has been described as “a primary school instructional reform project intended to introduce pedagogical practices which promote independent thinking, opinion information, collaboration and cooperative work, integrated thinking, concepts of intellectual and personal responsibility, tolerance, and respect for alternative ideas and opinions and creative problem solving,” all of which are behaviors “necessary to develop and sustain a democracy.”³

A revised program description of the project states that

the primary goal of the Orava Educational Reform Project is to introduce an “ethic of democracy” into the Slovak Educational system by bringing to the Slovak educational system, methods of democratic tracking which will promote the development of democratic processes and values among future generations of Slovaks, and prepare these citizens for their role and responsibilities in a democracy.⁴

The project's framework and activities have widened considerably since the 1994 USAID grant and have grown even broader since Dr. Kurt Meredith and Dr. Jeannie Steele, the codirectors of the Orava Project, initially developed the project concept. The codirectors' earlier contacts with the Deputy Minister of Education, Slovak educators, and public officials during visits to Slovakia in 1992–1993 provided important assessments and groundwork for considering both the potential for reforms within Slovak basic education and the collaborative assistance the codirectors and their colleagues at the University of Northern Iowa might provide.

Interestingly, the philosophic focus of the project grant is not education per se but rather the reform of education training, methodology, and implementation (at both the basic school level and among school leaders) as a means to a more democratic process. The project's visionary approach to achieving elements of the democratic process depends not only on the training of teachers but also on the evolution of the relationship between teacher and student, student and student, teacher and administrator, and all three of these with parents.

Therefore, project impacts must be sought in the areas of process and outcomes that support the ENI's strategic framework Assistance Area II, Democratic Transition, the goal of which is to

³Evaluation Services Task Order #1 Final Version of the scope of work for Segment One of the two-step Orava Project evaluation.

⁴Request for Project Extension, Attachment One, May 20, 1999.

support the transition to transparent and accountable governance and the empowerment of citizens through democratic political processes.⁵

The rationale for the project's activity and support of Assistance Area II (as contrasted with Area IV, Special Initiatives/Cross-Cutting Programs, for example) is specified in the project's most recent USAID Quarterly Monitoring Report (2nd Quarter, January 1 to March 31, 1999), which begins

this activity contributes to strategic Objective 2.1 Increased Better Informed Citizens' Participation in Community, Political and Economic Decision Making and to Intermediate Result 2.1.1 Increased acceptance of democratic (civic) values.

The justification for placing the Orava Project under Strategic Objective 2.1 follows:

A critical obstacle to increased citizens' participation in Slovakia is the lack of interest and, in some cases, fear, of citizens to participate as well as the lack of understanding of the roles and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy. The apathy and learned helplessness, which for many became a coping or survival strategy during the Communist regime, cannot be overemphasized as a key impediment to democratic development in Slovakia.⁶

More specifically,

the University of Northern Iowa's Project is designed to help the Slovaks restructure their indigenous education system not only to reflect their commitment to new democratic processes, but also to prepare new "citizens" for participation in them. The Project is designed to introduce democratic teaching practices into Slovak basic schools and develop a teacher training program over a seven to ten year period that will foster an "ethic of democracy." Accordingly, independent thinking, risk taking, and personal responsibility—traits considered essential if democratic ideals are to flourish—will be promoted through instructional practices and revised curricula.⁷

While the concept of an "ethic of democracy" has been a consistent principle underpinning the Orava Project—and in fact predated the initial USAID contract by several years and is attributable to a professor at Comenius University and questions raised by the Deputy Minister of Education during a visit to Iowa in the 1991–1992 academic year—the project evolved rapidly during its five-year development and continues to show signs of further growth and development in the penultimate year (July 1, 1998, to June 30, 1999). One such sign is the project's formal recognition as an official Slovak NGO/association, which, it is hoped, will be sustainable well into the next century.

In an initial, unsolicited proposal to USAID (1993), the project was described as a "collaborative effort among the Ministry of Education and Science of the Slovak Republic, Comenius University, the University of Northern Iowa (UNI) and the Iowa International Development Foundation

⁵The ENI Strategic Framework, Strategic Assistance Area II, Democratic Transition.

⁶Ibid., p. 1.

⁷Ibid., p. 1.

(IIDF).” The project was “designed to restructure Slovak basic schools and develop a teacher training program over a seven to ten year period.”

In a letter indicating receipt of the proposal (November 24, 1993), USAID not only acknowledged the intended scope of the project but also requested further explanation of the term “ethic of democracy” and a clear definition of the proposed linkages between inputs and desired outcomes.

The authors responded with an extensive addendum (December 23, 1993), which, among other detailed information, noted that

the Orava Project is a collaborative effort and is based upon the shared philosophy that the inculcation of democratic ideals and behavior is best accomplished through democratic experiences. It is a process-oriented belief which holds that democratic behavior is best learned and subsequently practiced when the learning environment allows and encourages practical, relevant and routine expressions of democratic behavior. Democratic behavior is evidenced through open expressions of ideas and opinions, shared decision making, recognition of individual responsibility for self and community, voluntarism, independent thinking, critical reflection, consensus building and acceptance.⁸

USAID funded the project for a two-year period (1994–1996). Six months (April 1995) after project initiation, Dr. Charles Temple of Hobart and William Smith Colleges undertook a project evaluation. While attending a meeting of a committee on international affairs at a national reading conference, Dr. Temple met with Dr. Jeannie Steele and Dr. Kurt Meredith, who described the Orava Project and subsequently invited Dr. Temple to visit Slovakia to evaluate their activities. Dr. Temple’s work is the only evaluation of the project to date.⁹

At the request of USAID/Slovakia, Dr. Steele and Dr. Meredith submitted “A Concept Paper for the Expansion of the Orava Project.” Dated June 13, 1995, the paper proposed two levels of expansion that (Level I) would replicate programs in the Bratislava area and establish a relationship with Comenius University and (Level II) open a project office in Nitra. In proposing the expansion, the project codirectors noted, “The Orava Project has had a highly successful first year. Most of the goals established for the year have been met or exceeded (and) numerous initiatives launched in the Orava Region and at Comenius University.”

A USAID/Slovakia memorandum (August 30, 1995) acknowledged receipt of the concept paper and noted that the appropriate USAID staff discussed the paper in favorable terms. The memorandum cites several outcomes to date, specifically, the intention of the project office in Dolný Kubín to request the area Methods Center to use the Core Teacher Leaders course in fulfilling the Ministry of Education’s recent regulation that requires all teachers to have a postgraduate certification when applying for a salary increase.

⁸Addendum to the Orava Project: A Slovak Republic/University of Northern Iowa Collaborative National Education Restructuring Program, December 23, 1993, p. 2.

⁹At the invitation of the Orava Project, the Partners for Democratic Change/Slovakia completed (June 30, 1999) a project assessment and data analyses.

In February 1996, the University of Northern Iowa submitted a formal proposal requesting expansion and extension of the project from January 1, 1997, to June 30, 1999. Expansion was to be effective as of July 1, 1996, to allow the project to develop in a third region, Nitra.

In the renewed extension request, the “primary objective of the Orava Project” was to

activate the change process at both the in-service and pre-service levels of teacher education. At the university level, emphasis is placed on developing exemplary teacher-training programs, as well as changing teacher perceptions of their role in the larger education community. At the school practitioner level, effort is directed toward development of core teacher leaders who will act as teacher trainers for diffusion of the project objectives and serve as a continuing resource for educational renewal within Slovakia.¹⁰

On April 26, 1996, the codirectors of the Orava Project submitted an addendum to the original proposal for expansion and extension (February 1996). It included a 30-month budget as well as two fiscal year budgets, and annotates summary, “Input Accomplishments” and “Specific Goal Outcomes” through the date of the report with some projections as to further outcomes. It should also be noted that the addendum included a budget for an “external evaluator” for both FY98 and FY99 (at \$2,000 per annum), but that the two fiscal year budgets were not expended in Budget I (July 1, 1996 to June 30, 1998). The \$2,000 line item for an external evaluation for Budget II (FY99) may be expended for the assessment currently underway by the Partners for Democratic Change/Slovakia at the invitation of the Orava Project administrators. It should also be pointed out that neither the budget for Phase II/Year I nor Phase II/Years 2 and 3 included line items for evaluation(s) of any type during the period of project expansion and extension.

Finally, in January 1999, the Orava Project codirectors made a request to continue the project for one additional year on a “modified basis.” They based their request on the fact that the project would not have expended all funds by the current termination date of June 30, 1999. “Several purposes are proposed for the continuation,” among them the nurturing of the newly approved Orava Association to enable the NGO to develop its own resources; the support and expansion of a university-level pedagogical faculty and university communications network; the development of a public, professional dialogue among educators, including expansion of the project newsletter; and regional activity involving the Slovak Core Teacher Leaders. Funds in the amount of \$800,000 for these and continuing related endeavors are already available through the unexpended FY99 budget. Favorable consideration by USAID for the additional year is likely.¹¹

The rationale behind the foregoing history and introduction is twofold as follows:

- to provide a reasonable chronology of the Orava Project from its original, unsolicited proposal through its several expansions and extension; and
- to offer a running commentary on the project codirectors’ description of the project’s several purposes and the various initiatives that have resulted from the purposes.

¹⁰University of Northern Iowa Proposal for Expansion and Extension, February 5, 1996, p. 2.

¹¹Continuation of the Orava Project, submission, January 11, 1999.

III. Methodology and Responses on Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability of the Orava Project

To complete Phase I of the two-part evaluation, the evaluator undertook three steps: a review of written materials related to the Orava Project; interviews with USAID personnel in both Washington and Bratislava and with the codirectors and others associated with the Orava Project in Bratislava; and field visits to project offices in Nitra and Dolny Kubín and meetings with project “alumni” and others in Topolcany, Tvrdosin, Námestovo, and Dolny Kubín.

The materials for review included all available contract documents, budgets, an annual report, two years of quarterly reports, portions of the Orava Project website, evaluations, and ENI strategies. A copy of the evaluation undertaken by the Partners for Democratic Change/Slovakia was received on July 1, 1999, and is appended to the Phase I evaluation.

Briefings and interviews in Bratislava were limited to USAID personnel, the codirectors of the Orava Project, two members of the Faculty of Pedagogy at Comenius University (one of whom was recently hired as principal coordinator of the Orava Project NGO/Association for Democratic Education and will remain on the faculty of the university), and the two individuals from the Partners for Democratic Change/Slovakia who were hired by the Orava Project to complete a nearly simultaneous evaluation of the project.

While the interviews were intended as largely informational, they provided several insights that were subsequently corroborated in meetings elsewhere in the country and proved not only complementary but also indicative of the preparation undertaken by the University of Northern Iowa in advance of project initiation. The interviews revealed that

- the University of Northern Iowa assessed the needs and interests of Slovak teachers and educators in-country before launching the project;
- the University of Iowa decided to initiate the project in a region of the country (Orava) that is more conservative and traditional than Bratislava;
- a more realistic time line (seven to ten years) was given for the introduction and development of training and reformation;
- from the beginning, the project emphasized both education reform and the democratic ethic through revised teaching and learning methodologies and decision making within the region’s education system;
- bottom-up and top-down strategies were implemented from the outset. The project attempted to address both preservice and in-service education reforms by working through the Pedagogical Faculty of Comenius University and, where possible, the Ministry of Education as well as with district administrators, principals, and teachers in the Orava region; and
- a network of “trained” teachers began to have a positive impact on fellow teachers, principals, and district administrators.

As specified by the scope of work, the evaluation focused on questions concerning effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. A fifth question on access to and uses of technology was added later. A brief questionnaire was prepared in advance of visits to Nitra, Topolcany,

Tvrdošín, Namestovo, and Dolný Kubín. The questionnaires were administered to seven selected individuals from three districts, all of whom are either involved in project administration or have participated in one of the programs. A summary of the written responses is attached.¹² In addition, questions in the same subject areas were asked of the teachers and administrators in four of the cities. The following are summaries of their responses:

In part, the effectiveness of the Orava Project is related to project timing, the Slovaks' historical appreciation of a sound education, and the fact that the project did not abolish the existing education system. Early on, the project evidenced not just a top-down approach but also tried to bridge teacher training at the university level with a bottoms-up in-service program for basic teachers (grades one through four initially). The early inclusion of a second tier of teachers (grades five through nine), district administrators, and principals gave breadth to the principles espoused by the project since its outset.

The project's effectiveness may also be observed in the types of networking now taking place and the multiplier effects that are apparent through the second generation of trained teachers who are now training other teachers. While clearly positive, the results raise questions about the further development of the project, its ability to monitor its growth nationally, and the need for quality assurance as well as professional assessments of the training component and outcomes of that training relative to teacher/administrator/student performance.

In any event, when measured in terms of number of persons involved, changes in attitudes, and the introduction of student-centered methodologies, the Orava Project has proven a considerable success. What requires closer examination are measurable changes in student attitudes and performance, the reactions and responses of parents, and indicators of achievement on the part of students who move from Orava-related instruction in grades five through nine into the more traditional secondary schools.

One recommendation for further study is a two-pronged longitudinal investigation that would track the effects of education reform methodologies on a cohort of students from grades one through nine while simultaneously following students in the same grades where teachers practice traditional methodologies. Such a long-term study needs to be considered if the reform process is to become nationalized or marketed regionally. In order, too, is a follow-on study of the transitional effects of students entering the traditional secondary school curriculum.

In short, the shift in approaches to teaching and learning thus far appear to be effective in changing both attitudes and performance; however, a close, continuing and comparative evaluation of the preparatory years is essential for substantiating and validating assumptions made to date and verifying long-term (and possibly national) integration with existing secondary school curricula and performance.

The efficiency of the Orava Project is well established. It is extremely cost-effective and requires few materials. Space for instructional purposes and meetings has for the most part been available at little or no cost to the project. Efficiency is also apparent in the networking among those

¹² See Appendix C.

trained and not yet trained under the project. The informal sharing of information, ideas, and materials is evident in conversations and comments. Local project offices and coordinators demonstrate further efficiency in establishing links with district and school officials and administrators.

One missing element that would further increase efficiency—albeit at some cost—is expanded reliance on and training in computer technology, particularly e-mail and the Internet, to expedite more frequent and efficient communication among teachers, universities, Orava Project offices and coordinators, and international organizations.

Such uses of technology would permit more efficient and effective collection and retrieval of data on the number of teachers and others trained in developing other research information, perhaps in collaboration with participating universities. Certainly, greater use of technology would aid in promoting the project—through addenda to the existing website—as well as in accessing international information on funding for existing or future program components.

Along with its basic concept of education restructuring and reform, the project's efficiency and effectiveness have had a significant impact on a growing number of basic and elementary school teachers, principals, and district administrators. As yet, neither the Ministry of Education nor the universities can claim the same impact. Initial involvement by the Ministry (1991–1993) was positive and active—at least until the hiatus associated with the 1994–1998 administration. Since then, the Ministry has reasserted its involvement as indicated by the appointment of a liaison to the Orava Project.

The pedagogical faculties of several universities have expressed interest in and have even initiated both preservice and in-service training that uses Orava Project materials and methodologies. One course on educational leadership management is designed to provide school administrators with reform options and insights. A second course on prechildhood/early education follows the constructionist approach introduced by members of the Faculty of Education at the University of Northern Iowa. A third course, intended for students of the Pedagogical Faculty, addresses innovative methods of teaching and learning.

A further impact resulting from the Orava Project and involving the universities is a recent meeting between representatives of several Pedagogical Faculties and district principals and other administrators. The purpose was to discuss and explore avenues of collaboration between the schools and the faculties in “institutionalizing” several existing courses, thereby furthering the process of education reform as well as the recertification of teachers in compliance with Ministry regulations (and simultaneously increasing teacher salary levels).

After more than five years, the number of measurable project impacts is fewer than might be expected. On the one hand, it is generally acknowledged that perhaps up to several thousand teachers have been trained. On the other hand, aggregate data do not exist to confirm the number of teachers trained under the project to date. Clearly, a comprehensive breakout of teacher trainees by region, course, and grade level is essential to secure the financial support that is needed to sustain the project.

Impact is also measured by the effectiveness of the training effort. Again, the lack of systematic data means that the effectiveness of Orava training component was measured by personal exclamation and a large number of written testimonials as to the training's value to individual teachers. Without question, the project needs an outcome-based form of evaluation that relates effectiveness of training to results and that may be applied to changes in teaching methods, student-teacher relations, curricular content, perceptions, attitude, or the physical arrangement of classrooms.

There is little question among those interviewed that participation in the Orava Project has had a dramatic impact on their personal and professional lives. However, it was not possible to interview those on whom the project has had the greatest impact: the students. Nor was it possible to interview parents or others in the communities to determine their assessment of the effects of the Orava Project training on the children. Likewise, it impossible to evaluate the reform initiatives that may have been undertaken by the several principals interviewed for the evaluation. The principals concurred, however, that they would gladly find substitute teachers for those who wanted to participate in future teacher training programs.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of the Orava Project, other than its current and future impact on the districts served, is sustainability. Clearly, because the Orava Project has remained within its contracted budget, it will be able to extend its contract by a full fiscal year. What is less clear is how the project and the momentum it has been able to develop will be sustained after June 30, 2000. The project lacks any documents or "blueprints" that lay out Orava's future. Nonetheless, individuals in various districts who were questioned about project sustainability felt that the matter would be resolved on a local basis, that people would volunteer their expertise, that district and national support would be available, etc. While the respondents' confidence is commendable, it belies the country's current and likely future economic conditions.

The fact is that Slovakia's economy is poor and the school systems generally lack funds. The poorest of the systems are at the basic education level (the less affected institutions are the universities). In any case, all are relatively poor. Therefore, considering national economic conditions in general and the financial plight of the education system in particular, the period as of June 30, 2000, does not look promising with respect to funding from the Ministry of Education or even from current participating districts, let alone from other national resources.

One hope and possibility is institutionalization of the reform movement and of the courses in either the Ministry or the four national Methods Centers allied with the Ministry and through which in-service training and recertification of teachers takes place. Another option is a Ministry/university collaborative relationship and funding. Yet, without evidence of even short-term strategic planning or funding, project sustainability remains highly questionable.

The official designation of the Orava Project as an NGO will be somewhat helpful in attracting regional and national funding by signaling the association's "nonprofit" status. But without the NGO's designation as a 501(c)(3) entity, major U.S. or even international foundations and corporations may not provide funding. More likely sources include UNESCO and the World

Bank. Nevertheless, what is important to the long-term sustainability of the project—even in its current form—is a strategic plan that clearly defines project objectives over a three- to five-year period, identifies realistic costs, and documents outcomes to date and projected results.

Access to and uses of technology is the fifth and final area of the assessment. It raises questions that deserve further examination in Phase II of the evaluation. While not included in the final scope of work, technology is so vital to the project's sustainability, funding, data collection, communication, and collaboration that a separate section on technology access and use is included in the report.

IV. Technology

Perhaps one of the weaker aspects of the Orava Project—“a complex project involving the interactions of many educators across cultures and perspectives”¹³—is its technology component.

The project’s 1995 annual report noted

technology is a fundamental component of the Orava Project. Technical applications are essential for the Orava Project to keep in touch with the many people and institutions in the project. From Iowa to Orava, from Bratislava to Washington, without technical support, project progress would be far more limited. The Orava Project technological component has been extremely active and effective.¹⁴

The Orava Project has established a website maintained by the University of Northern Iowa. The site provides information on various topics, including Orava Project documents, core teacher leaders, project staff, and so forth. Some but not all of the information is reasonably current. For example, information on the Core Teacher Leaders’ upcoming course states, “The beginning of the 1995–96 school year will mark the launching of several new initiatives.”¹⁵ In like manner, “A second CTL group, representing grades 5–8 will begin their work during the 1995–96 school year.”¹⁶

In each of the group interviews conducted outside Bratislava, few respondents were able to comment favorably on the availability or uses of technology (see also summary of written responses to prepared questions). In the first place, the education system provides no funding for computers, little or no access to them (“If we can’t buy chalk, we certainly can’t afford PCs” was a common comment), and limited training in how to use PCs. Nevertheless, all interviewees voiced a strong interest in learning how to use technology and clearly recognized that technology would provide a vehicle for communication and further collaboration. Computers are, however, in place in the Orava Project offices, in some district offices, and in limited number in the Pedagogical Faculties in the universities and in libraries.

Considering the needs for ever-growing communication should the project continue to thrive and grow (as is likely), immediate and considerable attention is recommended for the critical area of long-term communication. Two possible avenues could provide some assistance.

- Increasing computer capabilities at each Orava Project office by regularly promoting small group instructional classes for interested teachers, administrators, and possibly regional officials.

¹³“Sustaining Democracy Through Education,” 1995 Annual Report of the Orava Project, p. 18.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁵The Orava Project Website, Core Teacher Leaders, p. 1 of 2.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 2 of 2.

- Investing in computers to be located in several centrally located schools within each of the current Orava Project districts, with information offered by the coordinators and qualified teachers and administrators.

The resultant sharing and networking would not only further the democratic principles of the project but also simultaneously provide needed incentives and training to upgrade current technical knowledge, capacity, and use.

Unfortunately, the universities do not appear to be as helpful in this area as they might. Several teachers from the CTL 1–4 course indicated that only one PC was available to the students in their Pedagogical Faculty and that they merely “saw” the system. Of this group of ten teachers in the Nitra area, none was computer-literate or had access to a computer. All said they would use PCs (or learn how to use), if available. For one teacher, the computer was “the music of the future.”

As a start, the Orava Project website could be updated and programmed to provide computer instruction intended for downloading. Further consideration might be given both to increasing hardware and appropriate software and training a cadre of individuals during the final year of the project (and, it is hoped, beyond). Should strategic planning be implemented during the project’s final year, a major effort might be directed toward establishing a model collaborative electronic network involving University of Northern Iowa as the U.S. link and perhaps Comenius University and the Orava Project offices as in-country partners. Such an arrangement would further ensure long-term ties and electronic collaboration as the project grows in new directions.

V. Conclusions

With the Orava Project, the United States government has made a five-year-plus investment in the future of Slovak education. The project has focused on both teacher training and basic and elementary school methodologies in three districts of Slovakia and to varying degrees in the Pedagogical Faculties of several of the national universities. Funding for the Orava Project is to conclude as of June 30, 2000; the USAID Mission in Slovakia is to close at the end of September 2000. The codirectors of the Orava Project returned to the United States at the end of June 1999. From their base at the University of Northern Iowa, they will continue to advise project administrators.

The official legacy of the Orava Project will be the Orava Association for Democratic Education, a registered Slovak NGO. It is to be headquartered in the current office of the Orava Project in Bratislava. Along with the two other regional offices, the NGO will be administered by Slovaks who, along with teachers, principals, district administrators, and university professors in the several areas where the project has been active, will be responsible for future implementation of the programs initiated during the term of the USAID grant (1994–2000).

The role of the Ministry of Education is of critical importance. Designation of the Director of the Office of Secondary and Elementary Schools as liaison to the Orava Project and the Orava Association for Democratic Education has recast the Ministry's previously passive involvement in the project.

The question of sustainability is crucial and should be considered on two levels: first, maintenance of the current administration, dimensions, and logistics of the project; and, second, a continued expansion of the project to make it a national (if not regional) effort. If only the former is to be considered, it is possible that the dimensions of the project as of June 1999 could be sustained not only by existing employees and volunteer personnel but also through national and international gifts and grants, through the initiatives of project management, and/or through the assistance of the outgoing codirectors and the University of Northern Iowa. Sustainability could be achieved, in part, through the newly recognized NGO.

Maintenance-type sustainability would, however, severely limit the initiatives already undertaken and dramatically dampen the enthusiasm and expectations raised to date by the project. Even though hundreds (perhaps thousands) of teachers have been trained in the Orava process and methodology, the project lacks a clearly defined plan for the orderly and nationwide or regional expansion of the several "courses" developed and offered over the past five-plus years. The initiative and enthusiasm of those trained can provide some forward motion, but questions remain as to a strategic plan for the country (or even for just the districts in which the project now operates) while funding to implement such a plan is nonexistent. At the same time, the project lacks personnel with sufficient experience or training in short- and long-term planning and funding to meet current needs. Consequently, it is imperative to weigh carefully the maintenance of current programs and initiatives against other possible alternatives.

The impact of the Orava Project is significant not only in terms of the number of teachers, administrators, and professors involved in the education reform effort but also in terms of, first, the types of professional and personal networks that have been established through the process of considering changes in teaching methodology, course content, etc., and, second, the confidence the training has instilled in all shareholders in the process.

In this regard, it is important to reiterate that the project objectives were collaborative from the outset. That is, they stemmed from the shared needs and interests of the Slovak people rather than from the preconceived ideas of the project directors. The project began intentionally in a traditional and conservative area (Orava) and subsequent training has followed a rigorous and intense series of sequenced “units”/workshops, the results of which are then tested in the classroom before individual teachers/administrators demonstrate their methodology to a peer group.

Given project successes to date, it is important to consider sustainability in terms of the following outcomes:

- Those trained can likely train others.
- Training has received formal recognition from the Ministry of Education and therefore can be used for purposes of “certification,” that is, requests for/authorization of salary increases.
- Training is both “top-down”—university to teachers-in-training—and “bottom-up”—basic school teachers involved in altering both the content of their courses and the methodology they employ.
- The project has attracted national and regional interest.

These outcomes suggest three possible futures for the Orava Project.

First, in the areas where training has taken place, it can continue. More teachers, principals, and district administrators can be trained. Simultaneously, the universities may collaborate further, although such collaboration is still somewhat uncertain. At least two universities (Comenius and Constantine the Philosopher) are collaborating and should be able to continue some of the project initiatives already underway. A third, Mejlá Bula University in Banská Bystrica, has recently put forward a proposal for innovative methods in teaching and learning.

A second option is to determine the feasibility, costs of, and time line for a truly national effort. Is it desired? Is it worth the needed effort? Is the GOS/Ministry of Education interested? Does the U.S. government run the risk of appearing to be uncaring in terminating its support of educational reform, of raising expectations and then withdrawing? These are major policy issues that are beyond the scope of this partial assessment, but they should be introduced for consideration at this juncture.

A third choice might be a concluding grant from USAID/Washington that identifies explicit targets/achievements and specifies the appropriate level of involvement on the part of the Ministry of Education and the U.S. partner, with agreed-upon benchmarks and external evaluations outlined in advance. Such a defined process might then request a concluding contribution to basic education reform and indicate an understanding that a cadre of Slovak educators/administrators from all levels

is not only to be exposed to further educational reforms and innovations but also that a select group is to undergo training in long-range/strategic planning and fundraising (how to write proposals, how to identify international resources, and other skills).

VI. Recommendations

The following recommendations are both general and specific. While the evaluator understands that the University of Northern Iowa has submitted a new, unsolicited proposal to USAID/Washington, he is not familiar with the proposal's contents. Therefore, the present report and its recommendations focus solely on the impact and sustainability of the current Orava Project.

The evaluator has considered the project's expansion in terms of the number of teachers initially trained and the number of teachers now training others through the Core Leader Teachers' courses (grades one through four and five through nine). Clearly, the multiplier effect is extending the project's reach. The codirectors and the Orava Project office coordinators do not know the total number of teachers trained to date; the figure may exceed 2,000.

The two codirectors have returned to the United States, from where they will manage the project full-time during the final year of the current, extended contract. The three office managers (Bratislava, Nitra, and Dolný Kubín) and teachers trained in the Orava concept and process will coordinate day-to-day operations.

Several professors of the Pedagogical Faculties of Comenius and Constantine the Philosopher universities will continue to offer courses in early childhood education and in the Educational Leadership Program. Two professors at the MatejBel University have submitted a third proposal for Innovative Methods of Teaching and Learning aimed at students of the university's Pedagogical Faculty.

These efforts are outgrowths of previous activities, but they all raise the same fundamental questions. What is the impact of the Orava Project to date? How has its effectiveness been assessed and measured? Is there a comprehensive, strategic plan for an orderly and coordinated national expansion of the project? If so, how is the expansion to be managed and funded?

These questions led to five major, systemic recommendations and to ten specific suggestions regarding the final project evaluation.

Recommendation 1

In view of the final year's extension to the current contract (through June 30, 2000), the return of the codirectors to the United States, and the closing of the USAID/Slovakia Mission in September 2000, the development and implementation of a short-term, strategic plan for the future of the Orava Project/Orava Association for Democratic Education before termination of the present grant is strongly recommended.

Recommendation 2

It is further recommended that the strategic plan address three general issues as discussed below:

- Professional Objectives

Is the project to be fully national project? If so, what role(s) will the Ministry of Education assume? And if the GOS should change and prove unsympathetic to the Orava concept, who will be ultimately responsible for the further development of the project? If the objectives are regional, what other countries, ministries, and agencies are to be involved? How will the concept and process be promoted regionally?

Similarly, what are the expectations for and role(s) of the recently approved Orava Association for Democratic Education? The NGO is purportedly similar to a 501(c)(3) organization in the United States. A review of documentation regarding the Orava Association's charter, officers, and budget but never received any materials is recommended.

For these and other reasons, it is important that at this stage in the Orava Project's in-country development, every effort should be made to ensure, first, a well-structured organization with clearly defined and active relationships with the Ministry of Education, and, second, a well-defined set of professional objectives and a reasonable time line for implementing those objectives.

- Program Development and Data Gathering

Given the rapid growth of the Orava Project and the fact that the total number of teachers trained is not known, it is essential to establish a national system for the collection and printing of all data on the number of programs offered by the project, the enrollment in each program, and other pertinent information. Data collection and compilation could be the responsibility of the three existing offices that are linked electronically, with all data subsequently retained in one of the offices. If for no other reason, such data and information would be useful in applying for other grants nationally and internationally now that the project is apparently recognized outside Slovakia.

A related recommendation calls for the development of an "alumni" directory that would be available through the several centers (and perhaps also in print form) and that would list by district and program all participants since the initiation of the Orava Project. If distributed within each of the districts and/or available nationally, the directory would provide a list of resources extremely useful to other districts, universities, schools, and teachers who want to learn about the Orava Project process/course. The directory would also strengthen the existing and active network of "alumni," making available important data not now accessible. Furthermore, such a directory would be extremely useful in providing documentation for fundraising purposes.

In a like manner, an orderly strategy for project growth and development is essential as the Orava process becomes better known at both the national, and, perhaps, international levels. With a second-generation effect already apparent, it is time for some sense of progression and consideration of how today's several programs/courses are to be further implemented and whether new courses are under development.

- Professional Training and Staff Development

With the departure of all U.S. personnel (the two codirectors in Bratislava and the two Americans in Nitra), the Slovaks will assume responsibility for day-to-day and week-to-week decisions. Specifically, three able individuals—two of whom speak excellent English—are in place in the three district offices. All three are computer-literate and enjoy a good working knowledge of both electronic programs and the various Orava Project courses. It should be noted, however, that the three coordinators are not trained in strategic planning, proposal/grant writing, or fundraising, all of which will be critical to the project's long-term sustainability. In addition, it is appropriate to question whether the codirectors have sufficient professional status to address issues and make decisions that might involve the Ministry of Education or the Ministry's Director of Secondary and Elementary Schools.

Therefore, it is recommended that consideration be given to providing at least the three Orava Project office coordinators with training in areas pivotal to strategic planning, program development, and national and international fundraising.

Recommendation 3

With the termination of the USAID grant within the year, it is of critical importance that adequate short- and long-term funding be secured to continue and expand the systemic educational reform process initiated under the Orava Project.

Training in and implementation of the fundraising process is highly necessary and desirable. It is unlikely that the GOS, the universities, and—to a large extent—the participating districts will be able to contribute much (if any) capital support to the Orava Project. Therefore, the project will need to generate funds largely from external sources both in-country and internationally.

The project's recently approved NGO status does not grant nonprofit standing. However, the project may overcome its lack of nonprofit status by either forging a further, formal link with the University of Northern Iowa and its Office of Education for Democracy (which is run by the Orava Project codirectors) or creating a U.S.-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity that would raise funds in support of the various educational activities that the former Orava Project (now the Association for Democratic Education) wishes to undertake after termination of the USAID grant.

In short, to sustain the programs already initiated—let alone increase them in number or geographic scope—a continuing source of funds will be needed. No such resources are available at present or in reserve, and no fundraising plan or national capacity is in place to generate funding.

Therefore, formulation of a comprehensive development plan is recommended. The development plan should be consistent with the short-term strategic plan. UNI could take the lead in development training—perhaps through the Iowa International Development Foundation (IIDF), which played an earlier role in the project. Training could be delivered in-country by consultants or through attendance at workshops in the United States, United Kingdom, or Europe sponsored by the Washington, D.C.-based Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE).

Development training and a clear strategic plan are essential for the sustainability of the current project and steps should be taken to put both objectives in place.

As for in-country fundraising, little or no apparent effort has been made to involve the American Chamber of Commerce, which currently counts over 150 members, many of which are financially sound U.S. corporations (Merck, Lucent Technologies, Coca Cola, Pizza Hut, Compaq, etc.). Such corporations might find it attractive to be associated with the Orava Project and indeed, they command the resources to contribute both in-kind and financially. At the least, the new NGO could become a member of the chamber along several other education-related institutions that are already chamber members and thereby earn some further visibility for the project.

Recommendation 4

Technology is covered in another part of the report, but it is important to comment on it here because it has a high priority in the report's overall recommendations. The presence and rise of electronic technology in Slovakia is limited. However, a far greater introduction to and use of computers could (and should) be encouraged and implemented.

In the original proposal submitted by the University of Northern Iowa, technology was to play a major role. In particular, e-mail and computer conferencing were to be the central means of communication among participants. While the international networks needed to facilitate such communication are already in place with the Bitnet and Internet links,¹⁷ communication as a key component of the Orava Project has been only partially fulfilled.

Beginning with the current UNI web page, some of the contents of which have not been updated since 1995–1996, applications of contemporary computer training and use should be increasingly apparent. For example, the Orava Project offices, all of which have computers and employ computer-literate coordinators, could use existing equipment to facilitate communication, data retrieval and collection, and the exchange of program information with one another and with university departments that are collaborating on the courses. As noted elsewhere, however, university professors apparently do not use e-mail regularly; principals, teachers, and students have only limited access to computers and, consequently, communicate little through electronic technology. Cost is a recognized factor, but far more could be done with what is available in both Slovakia and in the United States.

Therefore, the evaluator strongly recommends development both the means and capability for extensive electronic communication under the auspices of the current Orava Project. The communication network should extend to universities involved in project courses, individuals who can communicate electronically within Slovakia (and who either want to or should learn about the project), and UNI and other international institutions and individuals (visiting professors, for example) who have participated in the project. The involvement of international participants could be significantly increased by updating the information on the UNI website.

¹⁷The Orava Project: A Slovak Republic/University of Northern Iowa Collaborative National Education Restructuring Program, The Role of Technology, 1993, p. 19.

Recommendation 5

It is surprising that the current project has undergone only two external assessments in its five-plus years. Dr. Temple's 1995 evaluation, six months after the USAID grant commenced, was followed in late June 1999 by an evaluation undertaken by the Partners for Democratic Change/Slovakia. The Orava Project arranged for both evaluations, which were funded through USAID contracts. The current USAID evaluation is the first (and only) assessment initiated directly by the U.S. government.

Therefore, it is important in the coming year and beyond that the Orava Project plan for and initiate a sequential set of outcome-based, external assessments so that those involved in the development, implementation, and assessment of various programs and courses may fully appreciate and benefit from outside professional opinions and recommendations regarding project content, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability. Self-evaluation is relevant up a point, but outside collegial review and comment can provide a different and often helpful perspective.

Of particular interest is the May 1993 description of one of the codirector's responsibilities in connection with the UNI-Orava Project Planning Conference. Dr. Kurt Meredith's role was to

develop and implement an evaluation system which will help guide the efforts of the project and measure its overall success. Measurement procedures developed should establish baselines from which progress can be effectively measured and project modifications made.

In like manner, the then-Dean of the Faculty of Pedagogy at Comenius University reiterated his concern over the importance of an evaluation process.

Dean Bazany recommended that we develop a proposal that would identify several phases of the project. He again emphasized evaluation throughout the duration of the project and noted, at that point in time, he personally favored examination of teachers to determine their overall competency.¹⁸

While these quotations reflect the earliest thinking and responsibilities concerning the development of the Orava Project, they also support the relevance of an ongoing evaluative process that involves external evaluators and is organized around established measures based on outcomes.

Further Recommendations

In addition to the principal recommendations noted above, the following collateral recommendations are worthy of consideration during Phase II of the evaluation.

- Given the important role of the Ministry of Education in the future of the Orava Project, visit the Director of the Elementary and Secondary School Division. The Minister of Education appointed the director as liaison to the project.

¹⁸ See Appendix D, Trip Reports Summary Notes. Advance Team Visit to Slovakia, October 26–30, 1992, p. 71, Original Proposal.

- Visit one of the four national Methods Centers. The centers represent an important element in the process of sustainability and institutionalization. They are allied with the Ministry of Education and offer annual examinations for teacher recertification. They have accepted the Orava Project's Core Teacher Leaders' course. Once teachers complete the course, they may sit for a national examination, which, if passed, provides not only recertification but also a salary step-increase.
- Visit the University of Northern Iowa not only to meet with the codirectors of the Orava Project and some of their colleagues who participated in the program but also to assess the Office of Education for Democracy and perhaps the Iowa International Development Foundation. Visit the Orava Project website at <http://www.uni.edu/coe/orava/>. Note that the Office of Education for Democracy was previously housed in the College of Education; it was transferred to the Provost's Office (Dr. Aaron Podolefsky) as of July 1, 1999.
- Visit one or two universities, perhaps Comenius and either Constantine the Philosopher (Nitra) or MatejBel (Banska Bystrica), to meet with members of the Faculties of Pedagogy who are/have been involved in Orava Project programs.
- Check computer access and capabilities.
- Determine the viability of the Orava Association for Democratic Education. What are its priorities? Who manages it? How were managers selected? Where does it secure its funding?
- Review selection procedures for all programs. How are teachers, principals, and district officials selected?
- Assess application of the project's concept and process to Slovakia's minority populations, for example, the Roma and Hungarians. Do these populations have equal access? Is there an equal effort to involve district administrators, principals, teachers, students, and parents?
- Review the project's budget for FY97-99, with particular focus on line item/income requests against subsequent expenditures. FY2000 is covered by funds not spent out of the original FY98-99 budget at an amount of approximately \$800,000. Where and why were funds underspent?
- Determine the extent of the codirectors' ability to administer the current project full-time from Iowa and/or to manage additional regional and international activities whether undertaken by the codirectors or their Office of Education for Democracy.
- Arrange to interview a sample of parents and students, separately, if possible. Their points of view regarding changes in methodology and more student-centered approaches to teaching/learning are important.

VII. Questions

The scope of work requested the provision of questions that might assist the Phase II evaluation team in its efforts. The following focus on different areas or project interests and may be useful to those visiting Slovakia in September.

1. Are the existing Orava Project coordinators professionally trained in program design, strategic planning, and fundraising?
2. On what resources will the new NGO base its operational budget for 2001?
3. To what extent do the district offices/officers have the authority or capacity to fund the Orava Project office in their district on a continuing basis?
4. What steps need to be taken by the Ministry of Education and the participating universities to institutionalize the Core Leader Teachers' courses and/or the Education Leadership Program (or others)?
5. What incentives need to be provided to ensure demonstrable growth in computer training and use among and between those who currently have computers, the universities, and the universities and Orava Project coordinators/offices?
6. Other than by observation, how are existing teacher training programs measured and evaluated? How is teacher effectiveness measured? How are changes in student attitudes measured?
7. What capacity for growth and development has the Orava Project demonstrated? What should its future capacity be in order to maintain existing programs and develop a national presence?
8. Has the project built into the NGO a capacity in applied evaluation and assessment?
9. What democratic concepts have participants in the Educational Leadership Program learned? Which concepts have they been able to put into practice in their schools and with what results?
10. To what extent have parents been involved in the Orava Project process? To what extent have they been invited to comment on transformations in their children's classes?
11. To what extent have Core Teacher Learners and Educational Leadership Program participants considered or initiated community-based meetings with parents, secondary school personnel, and others?
12. By attaining NGO status, will Orava Project personnel gain knowledge of how to diversify their base of funding and how to develop appropriate skill in financial management practices?

13. Is the methodology of the Orava Project programs considered a feasible alternative approach to education? By the Ministry? By university Faculties of Pedagogy? By school inspectors? By district school administrators?
14. What are the attitudes of potential contributors to the in-country educational reforms initiated by the Orava Project—from global organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCO, and the Soros Open Society Foundation to national resources such as the American Chamber of Commerce?

VIII. Appendices

Appendix A

Orava Project Itinerary

June 17–July 2, 1999

June 17	Washington, DC	USAID Briefing Carolyn Coleman Pat Bekele Cameron Pippin (introduction only)
June 18	Severna Park, MD	Review of Orava Project documents
June 21-22	Overnight flight to Vienna, Austria, and bus to Bratislava, Slovakia	
June 23	USAID/Slovakia	Briefing of Project Pamela Goddard, Mission Director Maria Mamlouk, Program Officer Kathy Stermer, Project Officer Cameron Pippin, Desk Officer, Lithuania and Slovakia, USAID/Washington
	Orava Project	Briefing on Project Kurt Meredith, Codirector
	USAID/Slovakia office party	
June 24	USAID/Slovakia	Briefing on Project Ivona Fibingerová, Project Manager Assistant
	Luncheon	Kathy Stermer, Project Officer
	Orava Project	Briefing on Project Jeannie Steele, Codirector
	American Chamber of Commerce Reception	
June 25	Comenius University	Dr. Erich Mistrik, Vice Dean, School of Pedagogy Chair of the Department of Ethic and Civic Education

	Comenius University	Sona Kikusova, Early Childhood Specialist and Coordinator-Designate Orava Association for Democratic Education/Slovakia
	USAID/Slovakia	Briefing Kathy Stermer and Ivona Fibingerová
June 26	Partners for a Democratic Change/Slovakia	Dr. Vladimir Labath and Dr. Jana Pruzinska, External Experts
June 28	Travel to Nitra	Briefing and luncheon Dr. Sally Beach and Dr. Mary Melvin, Coordinators, Orava Project, Nitra Office Klaudia Lorinczova, Associate (and designated Coordinator of Nitra Office)
	Travel to Topolcany	Meeting with Core Teacher Leaders (CTLs) and District Inspector of Schools
	Overnight in Banska Bystrica	
June 29	Travel to Dolny Kubín	Meeting with Marcela Maslova, Orava Project Coordinator
	Travel to TvrDOSin	Meeting with CTLs and Educational Leadership Program participants
	Travel to Námestovo	Meeting with District Director, School District Director, School District Officers and CTLs
	Overnight in Dolny Kubín (*detailed itinerary attached)	
June 30	Dolny Kubín	Visit Kindergarten Meeting at Orava Project Office with Vice Director of School District and participants in CTLs and Education Leadership Program

	Return to Bratislava	(*detailed itinerary attached)
July 1	Orava Project	Debriefing with Kurt Meredith and Jeannie Steele
	USAID/Slovakia	Debriefing with Paula Goddard, Kathy Stermer, Ivona Fibingerová
	Travel to Vienna, Austria. Overnight.	
July 2	Return travel to U.S.A.	

**Orava Project Itinerary
June 29–30, 1999**

Tuesday—June 29, 1999

- 10:00 Meeting with Marcela Maslova, Orava Project Coordinator in Dolny Kubín, Matuskova 1650/10
- 11:00 Meeting at the Elementary and Middle School in Tvrdošín
 Olga Nowakova—Educational Leadership Program (school principal) and CTL 1-4
 Maria Durecova—Educational Leadership Program (school principal)
 Eva Horvathova—CTL 5-9
 Dr. Elena Babinska—CTL 5-9
 Zuzana Palova—CTL 1-4
 Renata Lajmonova—CTL 5-9 teacher (2nd generation)
- 15:00 Meeting at the District Office in Namestovo
 Dr. Elena Krausova—District Director
 Lubica Miklusicakova—School District Director and CTL 1-4
 Emil Révaj—School District Officer, Educational Leadership Program
 Alena Cajkova—School District Officer, Early Childhood Program
 Eva Ciernikova—CTL 1-4
 Etela Adamcakova—CTL 5-9
 Gita Ferancova—CTL 1-4

Wednesday—June 30, 1999

- 9:00 Preschool and Kindergarten Visit (Constructivism) in Dolny Kubín
- 10:00 Maria Jajdukova—Director

Jana Lassuthova—Teacher

11:00 Meeting in the Dolny Kubín office of the Orava Project
Mária Dudakova—Vice Director of School District

12:00 Dr. Maria Andrisova—Educational Leadership Program (school principal) and CTL 1-4
Zelmira Palkova—CTL 5-9
Daniela Facunová—CTL 5-9
Iveta Bobcekova—CTL 1-4
Jindro Cajka—ZS Istebne (School Principal)
Jana Hrabcakova

Appendix B

People interviewed in-country between June 23 and 30, 1999.

Bratislava: 11 persons

- USAID (includes Cameron Pippin)
- Codirectors, Orava Project
- Professors Comenius University (Mistik and Kikusova), one of whom will be new Orava Project office manager (Kikusova)
- Partners for Democratic Change (Slovakia)

Nitra: 3 persons

- 3 Directors, Orava Project Nitra office

Topolcany: 11 persons

- 1 Inspector of Schools (one of 2 for the district)
- 10 Teachers (CTL 1-4, 5-9)

Tvrdošín: 6 persons

- 2 Principals (Educational Leadership Program)
- 4 Teachers (CTL 1-4, 5-9/one second generation)

Námestovo: 7 persons

- District Director
- School District Director (CTL 1-4)
- School District Officers (Educational Leadership and Early Childhood Programs)
- Teachers (CTL 1-4, 5-9)

Dolný Kubín: 10 persons

- 2 Kindergarten (1 Director, 1 Teacher)¹⁹
- 1 Vice Director of the School District
- 2 School Principals (Educational Leadership and CTL 1-4)
- 4 Teachers (CTL 1-4, 5-9)
- 1 Coordinator, Orava Project office

Total 48 persons met during program

¹⁹School visit.

Orava Project Contacts

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Association</u>
Beach, Sally, Ph.D.	Associate Professor Literacy Education	Orava Association for Democratic Education (Nitra)
Bekele, Patricia	Partnership Training Specialist	USAID/Washington
Bezadova, Maria	Chief Inspector of Schools	Nitra District
Coleman, Carolyn		USAID/Washington
Dudáková, Mária	Assistant Director	Dolny Kubín District
Fibingerová, Ivona	Project Management Assistant	USAID, Slovakia
Goddard, Paula O.	Mission Director	USAID, Slovakia
Kikusova, Sona	Associate Professor	Comenius University
	Coordinator	Pedagogical Faculty and Orava Association for Democratic Slovakia/Bratislava
Klevana, Leighton	Executive Director	American Chamber of Commerce (Slovakia)
Körösöföy, Alexander	Travel Clerk	USAID, Slovakia
Krausová, Elena	District Director	Námestovo District
Labath, Vladimir	Professor, Faculty of Pedagogy	Comenius University
	External Expert	Department of Social Work and Partners for Democratic Change, Slovakia
Lorinczová, Klaudia	Assistant Director	Orava Association for Democratic Education (Nitra)
Mamlouk, Maria E.	Program Officer	USAID, Slovakia

Maslová, Marcela	Project Coordinator	Orava Association for Democratic Education (Dolný Kubín)
Melvin, Mary P., Ph.D.	Curriculum and Instruction	Orava Association for Democratic Education (Nitra)
Meredith, Kurt	Codirector	Orava Project, Slovakia (UNI)
Miklusicakova, Lubica	Director of Schools	Námestovo District
Mistik, Erich	Professor, Head of Department of Ethic and Civic Education Vice Dean, Faculty of Pedagogy	Comenius University
Pippin, Cameron	Desk Officer, Lithuania and Slovakia	USAID, Washington
Pruzinska, Jana	Professor, Faculty of Pedagogy External Expert	Comenius University, Department of Social Work and Partners for Democratic Change/Slovakia
Steele, Jeannie L., Ph.D.	Codirector/Professor	University of Northern Iowa, Orava Association for Democratic Education, Slovakia (UNI)
Stermer, Kathy	Mission Project Officer	USAID, Slovakia

Schools/Teachers Visited

<u>Teacher Name</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Name of School</u>
1. Monika Klarnarová	II.B	£5 Goydova ul.
2. Daymar Boháčikova	III.A	£Y Tribenská ul.
3. Mária Kokosková	II.C	£S Tribeska, ul.
4. Miriam Hajrová	II.B	£S Tribeska, ul.
5. Eva Bajnerová	IV.A	£S sv. Don Bosca

6. Merla Nerodová	III.B	£Y sv. Don Bosca Ty
7. Ludmila Lysová	VI.A	ZS Velké Ripnany
8. Magda Hubinská	II.A	ZS Velké Ripnany
9. Elena Volanská	IV.A	ZS Torermicka, Ty
10. Josefína Pokusová	I.A	£S Torarmicka, Ty
11. Maria Bezaková, Inspector of Schools/District		

Appendix C

A summary of the seven written responses follows:

1. How effective has the Orava Project been and why?

- Humanizing nature of the project.
- Parent-student-teacher communication developing.
- Teachers more self-confident and decide when to/not to use strategies.
- No research conducted on the results of the project.
- Improved cooperation among teacher community.
- Open discussions.

2. How efficient has the project been?

- Implementation requires no new materials.
- Network of teachers for advice and sharing of ideas and experiences.
- Strategies applicable across all grade levels (with appropriate adaptation).
- Principals support release time for teachers.
- Project brought depolarization into the schools.

3. What impacts have the project provided? What changes? How measured?

- Teachers see themselves as responsible decision makers.
- Children are active learners as measured by observation and conversations with students.
- Student-centered rather than teacher-centered classes.
- Networking among teachers; parents curious about new strategies.
- Curiosity among colleagues.
- Introduction of critical thinking.

- Teachers have responsibilities as well as rights.
- Internal school evaluations and observations.

4. How sustainable is the project? Who will sustain it? How funded?

- District and school interests and leadership.
- CTLs prepared to start their own groups.
- Central offices equals coordination, materials, etc.
- Collaboration with universities to institutionalize concept(s).
- Material help is a weak point; inadequate in the system.
- Establishment of Educational Center.
- Cooperation with Methods Centers.
- Ministry appointed a contact person for the project.

5. Current access to/uses of technology?

- Extremely limited.
- Primary schools lack funds for computers/copiers.
- Universities on Internet, but faculty lack experience and choose not to use e-mail.
- Schools are entirely out of money.
- Some access to personal computers in district office(s).
- Interest in communication with UNI.
- If available, would use; “Music of the Future.”²⁰

While the above sampling and summary are modest, the responses appear to reflect accurately the opinion and attitudes of others associated with the Orava Project. Although no in-depth

²⁰ Copies of the original responses are available.

outcome-based evaluations or analyses of the project's several courses exist, the general responses of those interviewed as well as those providing written comments was very favorable.²¹

In addition to the brief written questionnaire and summary on areas of effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability, and technology, the following project analysis profile was prepared to annotate briefly (and somewhat chronologically elements and aspects of the project that were viewed more critically and are deserving of attention and notation in Phase I of the current evaluation.

²¹ The evaluation, recently concluded on the Orava Project by the Partners for Democratic Change/Slovakia, will also substantiate this finding.

Appendix D

Trip Reports Summary Notes. Advance Team Visit to Slovakia, October 26–30, 1992, p. 71, Original Proposal.

The next meeting took place Tuesday morning, October 27 with Dean Bazany, Dean Switzer, Jeannie Steele, and Kurt Meredith.

At that meeting, Dean Bazany indicated that he would like the project duration to run from 7 to 10 years and to include nationalizing the project.

Dean Bazany recommended that we develop a proposal that would identify several phases of the project. He suggested that those phases include constitution of the working team, and he used the term “fact-finding team” at on point in time. He then suggested a phase of establishing technical connections, a third phase focusing on elementary grades, which would include field observation, teacher training, and curriculum change. He again emphasized evaluation throughout the duration of the project and noted, at that point in time, he personally favored examination of teachers to determine their overall competency.

Dean Bazany indicated that he was ready to commit to this project a mall team of people located at Comenius University to be assigned on a permanent basis. He noted that he would begin with two or three people, which would include a project director equivalent to Jeannies’s role and a bilingual secretary. He then indicated that he saw this project and the people in his office focusing their attention on curriculum, school organization, and teacher training.

Dean Bazany then described the various departments within Comenius University from which he would draw personnel to participate in the project. In addition to people from the Education Ministry, who are outside Comenius University, he listed the following:

- Educational Research Institute
- Institute of Child Psychology and Patho-psychology (special needs learners and child psychology)
- Institute of School Information and Prognosis
- Pedagogical Institute (Chair of Pedagogy and Chair of Psychology)
- Department of Social and Cultural Studies
- Department of Music Ed.
- Department of Plastic Arts Education
- Institute of Experimental Education

Please note it was at this point that I left this meeting to meet with Dr. Gajdosova.